



**GALLATIN GATEWAY SCHOOL
PO BOX 265, GALLATIN GATEWAY, MT 59730**

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Superintendent of Gallatin Gateway School I respectfully ask for your support of LC 1088, the *Study Resolution to End Child Hunger in Montana*. This very important resolution will be introduced to the Health and Human Services Committee on Friday, March 4, 2011.

Over the past two years, families in our area have seen a reduction in their earning capacity. Ultimately, this loss affects the quantity and quality of food being provided in the homes of children in our community. The Gallatin Gateway community, guided by Mrs. Carol Barmore, provides a meal to the entire community on the last Wednesday of each month. In February they served over 200 people.

Our school's free and reduced meal status has increased from about 25% of 180 students to over 40% of our enrollment. This is the first year, in my 12 years as Superintendent, that I send home food daily with families to ensure children eat each evening. And this is the first year that we have provided breakfast to over 40 children each day. In addition, our staff has been coordinating with Lori Christenson at the Bozeman Food Bank to provide weekend *KidsPacks* to our students who may not have adequate nutrition over the weekend when they are away from school. Lori recently emailed to let me know they have found funding to help 10-20 of our children for the remainder of the school year. Hurray!

The State of Montana requires all children in grades 3 through 8 to participate in state academic achievement testing. During the three testing days, our school provides children with breakfast, a healthy mid-morning snack, and lunch. Hunger affects the entire child -- physical, mental, and cognitive. The state is asking me as a Superintendent to improve student test scores yearly, but many of my families have prioritized a higher need -- providing enough income to feed their families.

It is ironic that during the very time you will be hearing and learning about the *Child Hunger Study Resolution*, I will be serving soup and bread to families in our community of Gallatin Gateway. As support to our families, I am providing a meal for anyone in the community on Friday, March 4 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm in the school cafeteria. I am expecting over 300 community residents and children.

As you can see from these examples, many volunteers in our area, including myself, are deeply concerned about the increasing number of families in our community and across the state who may not have adequate nutrition. I encourage you to support LC 1088 and delegate a committee to study the incidence and consequences of chronic hunger in our families statewide. I encourage you to help me find more ways that I can ensure Montana children have nutritious food every day.

Respectfully,

Kimberly DeBruycker, Ed.D
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Testimony for Joint Resolution LC1088- Dana Thompson, MSU Extension

I am here representing the Buy Eat Live Better Programs offered through the MSU Extension Service's Nutrition Education Programs. Buy Eat Live Better programs provide nutrition education to youth in Title I schools and qualifying adults in 28 counties and reservations throughout the state. Our target audience is low income families and those receiving or eligible to receive SNAP benefits and youth in Title I schools. In 2010 we taught basic nutrition to 1st, 3rd and 5th graders in 287 classrooms throughout the state and we reached 1,273 adults and seniors with our adult programs. We have been providing nutrition education to the families, individuals and youth of Montana for well over 10 years.

Here is what we have learned through Nutrition Educators, participant feedback and pre and post evaluations.

- Families struggle to put healthy foods on the table and report that is because of the cost or the access to those items they view as healthy.
- The definition of a home cooked meal can mean different things to different people, it can be eating fast food at home or it can mean preparing items from raw ingredients as well as heating packaged prepared foods at home.
- Individuals struggle to understand what foods are healthy and safe, the media headlines are hard to follow and often people struggle to know what is factual.
- Kids have a natural interest in food and cooking – it is viewed as 'fun'! Isn't that refreshing?

Nutrition Education can help families and individuals increase their knowledge and skills in this area by teaching the basics of nutrition and making healthy food choices on a limited budget.

Our programs have collected data and participant feedback from our series of youth and adult education programs. Our programs teach basic skills in the areas of nutrition, making healthy food choices, food safety, menu planning and shopping skills to stretch food dollars, and basic cooking skills families in Montana. The outcomes from our programs show that nutrition education does result in a gain in knowledge in these areas and more importantly a positive change in behavior.

It is heartbreaking to hear our Nutrition Educators report that a child they taught nutrition to in school reported wanting to eat more fruits and vegetables but he could only eat what he has in his house. I imagine it is just as heartbreaking to be the parent unable to provide healthier options for whatever reason be it lack of access, money, or know how. I cannot stress how important the topics of food security and nutrition education are to the welfare and well being of Montanans and how important it is we ensure the basic necessity of healthy food for our Montana children. Thank you for your time and consideration of this Joint Resolution.

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TESTIMONY FROM DAWN CANNON

CHILD CARE PROVIDER

MARCH 4, 2011

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Dawn Cannon. I am a licensed, NAFCC (National Accreditation for Families in Child Care) accredited, infant/toddler certified, and preschool, family group home provider operating child care 24 hours a day 7 days a week and specializing in ages birth to 5. I am a proponent of HJ8.

I am here to testify to the issue of childhood hunger in the state of Montana in which we witness on a daily basis and the effects that we see. In 2010, we served 57 amount of children in which 46 were without food on more than one occasion. Currently we have several children whom show signs of a lack of food. The signs we see are hoarding of food, wrapping their arms around the plate or bowl and hovering over so no one can touch their food or take it away. Taking food from others when they are eating or when they step away from the plate. We also see them going into the kitchen constantly stating they are hungry. These children with show signs of being tired, cranky, emotional ups and downs, have a hard time listening and following directions, interacting with peers, staying focused on learning activities. We are also seeing several with illnesses and tooth decay issues as a result of a lack of nutrition. As the children have been in care for a few days, we are able to curb this by feeding the children extra, reassuring them that we will feed them, and before they leave feeding them again and sending home with a snack. By the time the children return we have to start over. It is a vicious cycle. This is a critical time for our children in the birth to 3 when their brains are developing at the highest rate of speed in the entire human life span. It is imperative that they are receiving proper nutrition and are able to focus on developing not whether or not they will be fed. This should never be a thought or worry in a child's eyes. This is a matter for adults and adults only.

AS a child care provider and a witness to this devastating matter I am here to show my support for this study resolution that will help study and understand the child hunger and help to eliminate this terrible issue.

Thank you
Dawn Cannon

March 4, 2011

January 20, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a teacher in Missoula and I work with students who are some of the most at-risk of going hungry or having food security issues in their homes. I work for Women's Opportunity & Resource Development (WORD, Inc.) and provide academic assistance to students during the school year and run a summer camp (the Summer Arts & Leadership Camp) for the same population during the summer. All of the students and families I work with are either homeless or at-risk of homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These are the families who benefit the most from programs that provide free and reduced-cost meals to children. These programs are a vital part of providing the most basic services to needy families. Providing easy access to nutritious food for children is fundamental to academic and social success for these children, as it plays such a key role in their early development and thus their future.

During the school year, the students I serve receive free and reduced lunch provided by Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS). This is a vital service providing both breakfast and lunch to students. This service is absolutely critical to their success each day. I know that this year MCPS has seen a significant increase in the number of students who qualify for this service. In an effort to continue to provide access to free meals in the summer, MCPS offers a 'summer feeding program' for needy families. This service helps to bridge the summer gap for Missoula's children.

As I mentioned, I coordinate the Summer Arts & Leadership Camp (SALC), a camp that serves around 70 students each summer and offers a safe, structured and fun summer free of charge to our students and their families. SALC, partnered with MCPS, provides breakfast and lunch (as well as plenty of snacks) to our students on a daily basis. This offers some basic food security to our students while they are at camp. Last summer the Missoula Food Bank also proposed sending (refillable) backpacks full of nonperishable food items home to help continue to provide for that security while students are away from camp over the weekends. The program was hugely successful and greatly appreciated by our camp families. SALC and the Food Bank sent home over 400 backpacks of food during a 6 week period last summer.

I can speak directly to the profound importance of these services for my students. I have seen students arrive to camp cranky and tired, unable to engage for need of breakfast. I have seen students make themselves ill on the first day of camp by eating too much cereal, thinking that they need to get as much as they can because it might not be there tomorrow. I have had to sit down with these children to explain that breakfast and lunch and snacks will be there for them everyday. And I have seen their joy at this realization. Access to good nutritious

food is a fundamentally basic need. I cannot imagine a family having to go without. And yet I know that so many of the families I work with do.

This last summer I noticed a shift in the population that I saw at camp. There were a greater number of families that, due to the economic downturn, found themselves to be in need, where before they were able to get by. I think that this shift speaks to the increased need generally for Montana families. I know that the services we provided made a difference for their budgets and the lives of their children. It is so absolutely vital that children have ample access to good, nutritious food. It affects their neurological development, their classroom performance, their social development, their health and their happiness.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I urge you to take action to eliminate childhood hunger, and to do so in a way that offers our children the best possible foods so they can grow up healthy, without having to worry about where their next meal will come from.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lisbon
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